Write me well, my love

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/39623148.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter
Additional Tags:	Epistolary, Canon-Typical Violence, Slow Burn, Falling In Love, Canon Compliant, Episode: s03e06 Dolce, Canon Divergence from Dolce, Angst with a Happy Ending, Hannibal Lecter is the Chesapeake Ripper, Hannibal Lecter Loves Will Graham, Will Graham Has Encephalitis, Will Graham Loves Hannibal Lecter, Introspection, These two idiots can't communicate so they write letters instead, Canon-Typical Cannibalism
Language:	English
Series:	Part 3 of Hannibal bingo prompt fill
Collections:	Hannibal Bingo
Stats:	Published: 2022-06-14 Completed: 2022-06-16 Words: 10,067 Chapters: 3/3

Write me well, my love

by acatbyanyothername

Summary

In the aftermath of Tobias Budge death and shaken by the possibility that he could have lost Will, Hannibal begins to write letters he never intented anyone to see.

If this wasn't already clear, letters comprise most of the story. They begin in season 1, span the entirety of season 2 and the first half of season 3.

Notes

This story is my third prompt fill for the Hannibal bingo. The prompt was "epistolary" and I had a lot of fun writing this. The story is complete and is going to be divided in three chapters, following either Hannibal or Will POV.

As usual I have plenty of people to thank for this story. First of all, thank you to Scruffy for her constant support and enthusiasm, thank you also to Pom and to my beta Lilibet for her precious help and her sharp eyes.

I hope you enjoy the ride.

See the end of the work for more notes

Letters to mylimasis

S1e09/10

Dear Will,

I admire your instincts, the way you know your body despite my treacherous words. You are right, this is not simply stress or mental illness as I've tried to tell you. You have encephalitis. Tell me Will, did you know that I can smell the development of such a rare disease on your skin like a bouquet? A potent sweetness that I can't get enough of.

Sutcliffe was more than happy to hide your sickness from you, dear Will. I would usually find this attitude unerringly rude if it didn't suit my purpose. I am not the only one fascinated by your beautiful mind and I am happy to say your acquaintance with Doctor Sutcliffe will end soon.

I'll admit to a certain possessiveness over you, and I do not share easily. Sutcliffe paid the price. Alas, despite all my usual precautions, a little mouse saw me and I can't risk being discovered. Mademoiselle Madchen will have to go, though her illness protects me for the time being.

Maybe she is right in a sense, all of us are nothing but masks in the masquerade that is life. A sentiment I am sure you would likely share as dreams and reality blur. But what a beautiful play it is, dear Will, when you can play your part to the fullest and enjoy the blood and death of it all!

One day, I hope, I will be able to share it with you.

Until then, I will continue to look over you,

Hannibal

s1e11/12

Dear Will,

Despite the encephalitis making you more susceptible, your instincts are as sharp as ever. And oh! I cannot keep quiet any longer. How beautifully you respond to light therapy! Seeing you shaking as the seizures take you in my office is a spectacle I don't tire of! You are a thing of beauty Will, with your curls stuck to your forehead by sweat and fever.

All your usual defences are down and I cherish these moments where I can observe you unchecked. Your beautiful eyes roll down in their sockets in a way that makes me long for a pencil and a sketchbook. Goya would not have painted a more alluring picture of madness.

You may be a fisherman and not a hunter, but your instincts are as sharp as the late Mr Hobbs and dear Abigail. The Copycat is indeed alive. Long live the Chesapeake Ripper. I hope you liked my first gift, Will. I had promised Uncle Jack I would help you see Mr. Hobbs better after all.

I truly regret what happened to Miss Madchen, I do. But it was unfortunately necessary. My plans are coming to fruition dear Will, although you might not appreciate the results. Jack is getting suspicious of you, and with the right push, he will have no trouble seeing what I want him to see.

You are close Will, so close, if only you hadn't come to me with your suspicions about the CopyCat killer, I wouldn't have had to say you were the last person to see both Dr Sutcliffe and Georgia Madchen alive when Uncle Jack broke into my office to berate me.

The trap is closing in on you, dear Will, and our time together grows shorter as the days pass.

I shall endeavour to enjoy our remaining days together,

Yours faithfully,

Hannibal

S1e12/13

Dear Will,

In the depths of despair, I'm the one you turned to. You once told me I was supposed to be your paddle. Despite what your words said, it seems I have successfully become such for you.

I wish you could see the beauty I saw when I looked at you this morning, shivering in your kitchen, drenched with the sweat of your nightmares, Abigail's blood under your nails. I am sorry it has come to this and a strange sense of loss is already welling inside me as I watch Jack take you away.

Bedelia had words for me about loss. Especially Abigail's, though the only loss Abigail suffered was that of an ear. You won't remember how it ended in your kitchen sink dear Will, but I do. My plans have finally come to fruition and yet I feel none of the triumph I usually feel.

I look back at that evening when you missed our weekly appointment, lost in a room at Quantico. The same queer feeling grips me now, knowing that when I open my door next thursday evening you won't be there. The evidence I have planted is too strong.

Imagine my surprise when I caught sight of you, shrouded in the shadows of the mezzanine of my office like a bird of prey, eyes shiny with tears. You continue to surprise me, to my own delight. Oh Will, marvellous creature! How you fight against yourself, against me, against Uncle Jack and even Alana Bloom and yet keep on being so certain of your own identity.

You slept all the way through the drive to Minnesota, fast asleep against the cool window which I imagine gave you some marginal relief against the fever that keeps on ravaging you. I looked at you then and wished time would stop, that the teacup would freeze in its fall and never shatter. I fought the urge to run my hands through your curls, keep you near me despite the danger you meant for me. You've awakened feelings in me, dear Will, and I'm not sure I know what to do with them, so unused I am to such superfluous things as regrets.

And now, as I watch your piercing gaze through the bars of your cell in the basement of the BSHCI, your anger and contempt darkening your brow, victory feels hollow.

Though my words are meaningless to you now, I am sorry Will.

Yours,

Hannibal

S2e01

Dear Will,

Life goes on without you. Jack feels guilty, Alana Bloom is angry and Bedelia still has words for me. I found myself confessing surprising truths, but such is the nature of therapy. I told Bedelia that you were my friend, and though it is true, such a word feels reductive to encompass our relationship. The only thing I am sure of is that we were never only patient and psychiatrist.

Stepping into your shoes feels exhilarating despite the tediousness of what the FBI work entails. I do not have your gift of empathy Will, but I have my own gifts and insights which are just as useful.

Is it wistfulness that guided my feet towards the BSHCI? I cannot say. Bedelia's words have managed to unsettle me, Will, and I found myself gripped by a foreign want, despite my best attempts. The clear timber of your voice and your cruel words, denying me friendship but promising me a reckoning made me feel more alive than I have in a long time. Marvellous creature.

The pen makes a poor substitute for conversations, since you will never see these letters, Will, and yet it is only here that I can be fully honest.

Take care Will,

Hannibal

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s2e02/03

Dear Will,

Seeing you distressed brings me no pleasure, but I can't deny the beauty of your tears. I wonder though if I can fully trust you. Prison is enough to change a man, and you've always been able to reshape yourself in the form of those around you. What surprises do you have in store for me, Will?

Strange how things change and yet stay the same. We keep on having conversations and Miss Beverly Katz continues to come to you on cases. Yet I miss you. I come to visit more often than is wise maybe, but I can't help myself, despite knowing Chilton hears and sees everything.

The ear is only the first step. Can't you see Will? I could free you as easily as I framed you. Say the words and freedom is yours. I care about what happens to you. You did not believe me then as I told you the words. And yet they were true.

Once again I found myself sitting in front of an empty chair on a Thursday evening, contemplating your ghost. Your presence lingers despite your absence and I find myself at a loss. The sharp sting of loss has settled between my ribs and isn't so easily displaced.

Despite my previous words, securing the path to your freedom is not as easy as I would like, Will. Some people are intent on keeping you behind bars, including the judge but I won't stand for it. Wait for me, Will, and soon you will walk out of Frederick's hospital as a free man.

Take care my friend,

Hannibal

S2e06

Will,

You have been very naughty. First denying me your company, then sending Miss Katz after me, and finally another killer? Devious, brillant, manipulative boy. How could I think that prison would remove you from the game? You've never had more agency than now it seems. Is this the reckoning you promised me?

This is not your design, Will. Though I could see the appeal of seeing me debased and hanged like Judas. I betrayed your trust and I suppose it's only natural that you would want revenge on me. What angered you the most? My betrayal? Or your inability to keep Miss Katz from harm? If this is any consolation, Miss Katz was no pig, and she will be missed.

I now bear your marks on my skin, Will. Though they are not technically yours and our mutual friend was prevented from finishing what he had started. I am proud of you, Will, your darkness grows day after day. It is beautiful. You are beautiful.

I'm afraid I can't pen you a longer letter. Writing these lines was already ill-advised of me. I can feel the tension of the sutures where they hold my flesh closed. Lovely Alana is frowning at me and so I must leave you, Will.

Until then, take care, dear Will,

Hannibal

S2e07

Dear Will,

You are a free man now. I wonder who will keep Frederick company now that both you and Dr. Gideon are free from under his thumb. It is a shame I had to abandon the mantle of the Copycat, but I am ready to pay heavier prices for your freedom.

Are you back with your dogs now? You were right, Will. Alana Bloom is very kissable. Though I doubt she would be receptieve to such attempts now. Do not let her fervent defence of my person vex you, Will, and keep you from a happy reunion with your dogs and home.

Enjoy your newly found freedom, Will.

Yours,

Hannibal

P.S. I take the pen again. My hands do not shake, and my heartbeat is steady. Yet I am gripped by excitement like never before. I had felt your transformation before, and I still bear

the marks on my skin, but it had not quite prepared me to see you emerge from the shadows of my kitchen.

Prison was your chrysalis and your metamorphosis is breathtaking. There is something quite pleasing to see that some things like your aftershave haven't changed yet. There is still a place for me in your world, if your visit is to be believed.

I had expected one of course, but not so soon. You honour me, Will. For the first time in a long time I do not know what the future holds. I relinquish control to you, Will, just as I let you press the mouth of your gun to my temple a couple of hours ago. I cannot wait to see how the game will unfold.

Until then,

Take care Will,

Hannibal

S2e08

Dear Will,

You've come back to me once again, in a space we once shared as patient and therapist—if we were ever just that. You may not believe me, Will, but you were a friend. Our friendship broke and I am not sure this new you will seek it again.

Your waters are deep, Will, and dark, especially since your release from prison, and I have trouble sensing your thoughts. Your openness is gone, burned off of you alongside encephalitis, and I mourn it.

Jack still relies on me, calling me to crime scenes. A fascinating case, one that would ignite your righteous blaze I think, for you do not care for people who harm animals, no matter how big or small.

Our conversations bring me much delight, Will. No more lies, no more pretence. Clarity becomes you, eyes crystal-sharp and each word a precise strike. You wield my title and its distance like a weapon. "Doctor Lecter". Among all my names, this is not the one I want to hear cross your lips.

Do you have any idea of the impact you have on me? I could hardly breathe so vivid was the image of your beautiful hands wrapped around my neck. As intimate as a lover's embrace, more intimate than the one I shared with Alana certainly.

How I yearn to stand by your side, if you allowed me to. You say you're alone in your darkness, Will, but I was there before you. Were I prone to whimsy I would say I was waiting for you. I have been alone for a long time, Will.

But now I yearn.

I hope you will forgive me for staying your hand and sparing M. Ingram's life. I didn't think you would pull the trigger, but I will gladly admit that even with all my knowledge and intrusion I could never entirely predict you.

Beautiful creature. Have you any idea of the well of emotions you invoke in me?

I can whisper through the chrysalis, but what hatches is entirely yours, and I find myself enraptured.

I still shiver from touching you. You allowed me the privilege of curling a hand around your nape, nestled amongst your curls. I could no more prevent the fondness in my voice and smile as I whispered words of love to you than I could prevent the sun from rising in the east.

Forgive my ramblings, Will, the world is shifting like sand under my feet and I find myself swept away by the currents.

Laukiu nesulaukiu,

Hannibal

S2e09

My dear Will,

Sending Randall Tier wasn't a mistake nor a miscalculation. I can't bear to repeat the error I made when I sent you after M. Budge. The agony of wondering if I had killed you, however indirectly, was already too much back then. I cannot imagine what I would feel now.

How far you've come! Your gaze never wavers from mine anymore during our discussions. Where you used to wander, you now sit across from me, filling the seat with your full presence as I drink the words that fall from your lips like pearls.

Have I told you before how beautiful your metamorphosis is? I find myself quitte helplessly mesmerised, dare I say hooked, when I see you yield your newfound influence on the world around you, myself included.

Thus my mind palace grows, filling itself with new rooms where you now prowl, free and at ease. I freeze and carve away precious moments to keep them from the destructive erosion of time. In my mind palace they will glow golden, forever preserved.

Still, it is not enough, and I keep drawing you, filling sketchbooks upon sketchbooks with your likeness. This time it was you and I, sitting side by side. Close but not touching.

Never touching.

A maddening distance. It is less than the polite distance good manners would allow, but never close enough. Only burying myself inside you, nestled inside your heart would tame the terrible craving that fills me.

Consider Randall a chance to become more intimate with your instincts. But more than this, consider him a gift, in the hope that you will find that quiet sense of power again.

S2e10

Mylimasis,

I did not think I would write again so soon. You've barely departed and already I rush to write these lines.

How many more times will you surprise me? Will you ever cease to? I hadn't expected to find Randall's body laid out like a feast on my dining table when I sent him after you. You stood by the table like a triumphant god, flexing bruised and bloodied knuckles absentmindedly.

You let me touch you again, precious one. You let me bathe your knuckles and wrap them tenderly in gauze, but a part of me aches.

Am I doomed to only be able to touch you in the aftermath of violence? Is it my fault?

Our history is drenched in lies and blood but more and more I find myself craving those moments in my study as we exist side by side in quiet intimacy.

Something terrible and tender has gripped me and refuses to let me go. You are glorious in your violence, Will, and I will never cease to encourage you to be intimate with your instincts. But those hands are also capable of tenderness as they pet through the fur of dogs.

Stay with me, Will. Don't retreat. You have everywhere to go and you went, leaving me behind, and my home suddenly grew cavernous and cold.

You didn't ask for my help with Randall. I am eager to see your design, mylimasis. It will be beautiful.

Good night, Will, I hope you will find rest before Jack Crawford comes calling.

Thinking of you,

Hannibal

S2e11

Mylimasis,

Our dinners together have become communion. Never have I tasted something quite so delicious despite the bitterness of the meat. Never would I have dreamed of ever receiving such a gift.

The present was as much the meat as us standing side by side in my kitchen, preparing the meal together. Do you know how few people I allow into this place? And among them how many do you think are allowed to participate?

Alana was allowed to share this space. But only to observe. Never to participate. She closed her eyes and remained blind whereas yours are wide open.

Will you allow me to help? Show you how to subdue the meat and keep it free of the acidic taste of fear? There is so much I want to share with you, Will. So much to the world that I want to show you.

Watching you eat ortolans was perhaps the most erotic experience of my entire life. How your lips closed around the bird, how you chewed and swallowed it. Transfixed, I couldn't eat mine until I watched you consume it all. I watched the bird disappear and wished it could be me.

Your lips have wrapped themselves many times over something I presented to you, be it food or the tube by which I fed you Abigail's ear. But they never wrapped themselves around me.

I want to taste you, Will, kiss your trembling eyelids and your beautiful lips.

But like Tantalus I fear I am doomed to look and never touch.

Yours,

Hannibal

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Will,

Despite my previous and perhaps hasty words we grow closer and closer every day. You were beautiful tonight in my office, illuminated by the flickering light of the fire, a glass of warm amber in your hands.

You're going to be a father, Will. The seeds left to rot when I made you believe Abigail died are flourishing again, to my dismay. Margot is crafty, perhaps more than I had given her credit for.

Such a developpement is not welcome. Once again, like an ouroboros our conversation drifts again to the subject of fatherhood. You asked if I had ever been a father. You asked, and I answered helplessly, stripped of all my masks.

Memories of Misha have risen to the surface of my thoughts often lately. My sister and my charge. If I could I would hold you close next to her in my body, never to be parted again. Thank you for not pushing, for seeing my pain that I could see reflected in your sea-glass eyes, shimmering with tears.

I wish I could give you Abigail back, Will. If only because she's our child and I would rather that your paternal instincts be directed towards her than Margot's child. Maybe someday, soon.

We are naked in our grief and things that cannot be anymore, like a shattered teacup on the floor that can never gather itself again.

The hour was too late to make the drive back to Wolftrap and yet you did not stay. Achilleus wept with Priam over Hector's death and was moved to mercy. Will you not grant me mercy, Will?

My house and heart are wide open. I only wish you would see it and accept it. I am yours, Mylimasis.

Love,

Hannibal

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s2e12

Mylimasis,

Your radiance is beautiful. Mathew was just the first, wasn't he? But he wasn't the only one you manipulated. Mason is your next target. I wonder. Am I being manipulated? Deceived, perhaps?

You said you were curious about what would happen if you gave Mason a little nudge in my direction. I am curious too. While whenever feasible, one should always try to eat the rude, Mason isn't an easy target. He has money, power, influence.

Would you help, Will, would you help me prepare Mason's meat and turn him into a bacon we could share?

You accuse me of fostering codependency, of taking away anything that isn't me out of your life. But in a way you are doing the same.

I haven't forgotten Jack's poorly disguised attempts at checking whether the meat at my latest dinner party was long pig, though he still calls on me.

You've repeatedly warned Alana away from me, with very little success, and now you want me to kill Mason Verger, hence endangering my whole practice.

I am indeed as alone as you are. Yet your mere presence soothes me, makes me long for companionship in a way I had never entertained before. How could we be alone if we were finally together?

I have dreams now, Will. Dangerous dreams where before there were only plans.

Someone is here, I must see to them.

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Dear Will, mylimasis,

I couldn't be sure of your reaction when you would discover Mason in your home.

Winston has been a good boy, standing vigil outside, waiting for you to come home. He's your latest stray, isn't he? I can see why you like him. He's fiercely protective of you and wouldn't come in until you were here.

Imagine my delight when offered the choice between murder and mercy you denied Mason your mercy without a blink. Beautiful creature! The way you looked at Mason, as if he was no more than a bothersome fly.

Where have your scrupules gone, Will? When I look at you, I see a hunger, mirror to my own. Is it truly just your empathy reflecting once again? Your delight at Mason's plight couldn't be faked.

Or you're a better actor than I had ever realised.

You looked at me, eyebrow raised, teasing smile on your lips and relinquished Mason's fate to me. How could I refuse you, when you looked at me so?

I would kill thousands for you, Will, drowning the Scamander in crimson until it overflowed once again like Achilleus did to avenge Patroclus's death.

You asked me to reveal myself to Jack, mylimasis, and I agreed, wondering if this what you were aiming for all along. How far I've fallen.

Sometimes I wonder if you are not a Siren luring me slowly but inexorably to my demise.

Despite my doubts, I still love you.

Eternally yours,

Hannibal

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s2e13

Will,

A strange heaviness has settled over your brow, mylimasis, pulling down the cupid's bow of your lips. What has you looking so forlorn, my love? I wish to soothe the furrow of your expression with tender lips and kisses.

Like a bonfire of vanities we burned my patient notes. Let Jack and his officers find nothing of worth when they come storming. I refuse to give up the confidentiality of my patients. I will spare them the scrutiny.

I am still a psychiatrist, after all. Who knows for how long, but for now I have an oath.

Once we've left this place behind, my office will be enshrined in my mind Palace, where I'll be able to revisit all the times we've shared this physical space.

My mind palace is vast, even by mediaeval standards, but there are some rooms in which I cannot bear to go. This one though? This one I'll revisit often.

Or at least I thought so.

You've once reared back in outrage when you realised I had smelled you, Will. Did you forget my acute sense of smell?

At this moment when I caught your scent, I smelled a ghost. Is Miss Lounds alive and kicking then?

Where I once thought the floor of this office to be sturdy, holes suddenly opened to engulf me whole. Darkness fell and all that lingered was the smell of lies and betrayal.

A yawning chasm has opened between us. My suspicions were correct after all.

I find myself praying to a God I don't believe in.

May he preserves us from the brewing storm,

Hannibal

***

Mylimasis,

I love you. I love you and this is why I offered you something I had granted no other before you. A second chance. A chance to run away with me, leave everything behind—Jack, Alana, my life. Let us run into the night and disappear.

If this is to be our last supper, I beg of you, please come with me. I don't need a sacrifice, Will. Come with me. You're all that I need. Please.

My words are clumsy but I won't beg you aloud, Will. Allow me this final dignity.

A clock is ticking somewhere, I can hear it but can do nothing to stop it.

For the first time I fear what the future will bring.

Hannibal

***

Mylimasis,

Why did you call me, Will? Was it to taunt me? A last desperate attempt to save yourself from damnation?

How ironic that this phone called damned so many. Jack. Alana. Abigail. Yourself.

Myself.

Oh! I do not bear the physical scars like you will, but I shattered too. You left me a broken-hearted man.

Yet I cannot say which broke me more. Your phone call or you shivering desperately in my embrace when I brought the knife to your treacherous flesh.

You looked at me, drenched and cold from the rain. Long gone are the days when you would avert your eyes from me.

A part of me wished you had. Instead I had to see the terrible knowledge that I was going to hurt you dawn on your face as I caressed it. You looked sad, my love. Heartbroken. Why?

Abigail was supposed to be a gift, the celebration of us finally coming together. It is only fitting that she would die as my dreams shattered.

Yet despite everything I couldn't bear to kill you.

I embraced you and left you drowning in her blood like I was drowning in sorrow. But I could not bear to kill you.

Perhaps you did change me.

I will never forget your grunts of agony, your pleading despairing eyes and your red blood drenching the fingers that clutched desperately at the wound I had given you.

I forgave you then, and took a piece of you with me to Italy. If I can't have you, your coat will have to suffice.

The rain washes the tears from my face but the pain won't go away.

Wade into the quiet of the stream, Will.

I won't be here when you come out.

I could have been yours,

Hannibal

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Will,

Since you so callously refused my invitation, Bedelia will be the one joining me in Italy. I do not know yet what I will do with her. Only time will tell.

We will go to Paris first, and then Italy. I would have liked to show you Italy, but some things simply cannot be.

You claimed to have changed me, Will. You assign too much importance to yourself. I will go on like I did before meeting you, and your influence will only be a ripple dying in the tranquil pond of my mind.

This will be my last letter. The plane is taking off. It's a pity I didn't think to burn the rest of the letters. One can only hope the FBI doesn't discover them.

Farewell,

Hannibal Lecter

Write to me of murder

Chapter Summary

Will finds Hannibal's letters, decide to go on a trip and write letters of his own

When Will gets out of the hospital, he feels adrift. A ghost among the living, despite the mark on his skin telling him otherwise. Chilton was right, Hannibal did know how to cut. He was a surgeon and the Chesapeake Ripper after all. Right now he felt more like a vengeful God, doling out punishments for the wrongs done against him.

He chose the most cruel punishment for Will. He kept him alive. Alone. Hannibal left and Will is reduced to staring at after images of him in his office, in his home. He's sitting on the floor, back to the wall when Alana comes in.

The place is his, theirs if he counts the ghost of Abigail that keeps him company now. But he's too weary, and the bite of his words is weak. Alana is strong, she survived and though she may never walk again, she didn't shatter. Not like him. She hardened like a diamond.

He envies her strength, he's as weak as a newborn and his injuries are only partially to blame. Alana looks at him and he doesn't know what to expect but certainly not the words she says.

"There are letters," Alana says, "Hannibal tried to hide them. I could never look at them, but I know they are meant for you. Maybe you'll find some answers there."

His voice shakes when he finally manages to speak past the lump in his throat.

"Thank you, Alana," he manages, clasping his hands between his knees to hide their shaking.

"They are in one of the drawers of his desk in the drawing room."

"Thank you," he says again, and hopes that Alana understands the implicit goodbye. He won't read the letters while she's here. Those letters aren't for *her* . They never were.

Alana nods, and Will closes his eyes, willing the sounds of her wheelchair to disappear faster so he can finally be alone again. Once he's sure there's no one else but him in the house, he gets up painfully and slowly, his core muscles screaming at the move.

The house feels cold, devoid of the warmth of the flickering fire. It feels too big now that Hannibal can't fill it with his presence. Will finds the letters exactly where Alana said they would be.

His vision goes white for a moment at the sight of them. There's so many. At least a dozen. All stacked in neat little piles and bound by a velvet ribbon, crimson like freshly spilled blood.

His hands shake. They haven't stopped shaking since before but now the tremors are more intense. He's afraid to spill the letters if he took them now. Instead he collapses on the leather chair, elbows on the desk and face in his hands, chest heaving with dry sobs.

He doesn't want to see what Hannibal has written. But he wants to know. He is desperately curious. He wasn't the only one keeping secrets it seems and he aches. Since when? When did Hannibal start writing them? Alana hinted at a habit already set by the time she was invited into Hannibal's intimacy.

His hands are steady now, or as steady as they will ever be. He remembers the tremors of his father's hands on the nights he overindulged and Will would come to collect him at the commissariat.

Will isn't drunk but this very much feels like withdrawal. A clawing need for something he can't have anymore. Except his poison isn't whiskey, he's too much his daddy's son for that, his tolerance is too high for it to be alcohol. It's Hannibal. After all, he never learned how to build resistance to this particular poison.

He retrieves the stack of letters from their hiding place and allows himself a moment to feel the smooth paper of the envelopes in his hand, the smooth paper and the soft ribbon. He has no place to put them. His pockets certainly aren't big enough. There's no other option left but to press them under his shirt against his heart.

He won't read them here. Alana was kind enough to leave, but there might be more people to come. He's curious why Freddie Lounds hasn't defiled the place yet. A curious case of arbitrary moral boundaries? She certainly had none when she photographed him on his hospital bed. Never had he regretted letting someone live so much.

His house in Wolf Trap is unchanged, his fortress of a boat in the night. He puts the letters on his bedside table as soon as he's home, his dogs crowding him in open delight as they always do. Crouching down to their level is possible, but it's too much effort for his abused muscles.

Instead he settles on the bed, kicking his shoes so he can lay on his bed, his dogs climbing in after him. Their warmth is comforting and Will lets himself drift between sleep and wakefulness for a while, just happy to still have his pack despite everything.

Finally, he doesn't want to stall anymore. His seeking hands find the letters easily and he brings them to the bed, opening the first one immediately. The visceral pang that stabs him as soon as he's greeted by Hannibal's looping handwriting is almost enough to make him change his mind.

He was wrong, he isn't ready. He misses Hannibal like a phantom limb. He aches. The letters will have to wait another day. Sensing his sudden spike of distress, the dogs whine. They press against him, wet snouts pressing into the hands that have let the letters fall back to the bed.

Curled among them, Will allows himself to cry.

The next day dawns. Gloomy light filters through the curtains. Will opens his eyes to see he's still surrounded by his dogs. He's warm and finally feels ready to read the letters. Last night he apparently had the presence of mind to put the letters back on his nightstand, which means they haven't been crushed under his dogs' weight during the night.

It's a relief. He doesn't know what he would have done if the letters had been damaged beyond repair before he had had time to read them. He takes the first one, and it unfolds like a flower in his grasp. The letter is dated all the way back from the day Tobias Budge died in Hannibal's office and as Will begins to read, it's Hannibal's voice he hears, not his.

He reads the first letter, then the second, and the third. He can't stop himself. Each letter is a declaration, saturated with a yearning that mirrors the one that gnaws at Will's guts. He doesn't get up, he doesn't eat nor drink, he just reads. Reads until the last letter falls from his nerveless fingers.

Fools. They had been fools, the both of them. And it had cost them almost everything.

Still, Will isn't dead and neither is Hannibal. This isn't the end, for either of them.

Will goes to sleep, exhausted but dried-eyed with a new determination. He will find Hannibal. Wherever he is. He will find him and they will talk, speak the words neither of them managed to before. No more lies, no more half truths. Will is sick of them. Hannibal tore them out of him and he doesn't want to go back to how things were. He wants Hannibal, free of pretence, and he wants to stand with him behind the veil.

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s3e02

Hannibal,

Maybe it's because you did let me know you, maybe it's because my eyes have been open for some time, but I know where to find you.

My ghosts are back, and not because of encephalitis, thank god. This time I know which kind of crazy I am.

I remember that moment in your office when we were burning your notes. The warmth from the fire and your own warmth as you stood close to me. Was it then that you smelled my

betrayal? I wonder what gave me away. I want to say it's Freddie's fault.

Somehow I know it is. Not killing her when I had the chance is a mistake that I still pay for to this day.

I remember you telling me about the Norman Chapel in Palermo. I know this is where I will find you again.

Somehow, despite having never set foot in it, I can see the skeleton on the floor, admire the sweeping golden arches and hear the organ's melody.

When did you grant me entrance to your mind palace? Was it then? In your study by the fire? I should probably thank you. The Chapel is a welcome respite from the hospital. I am tired of ending up in the hospital because of you.

Jack came to see me, asked me why I had called you. And I told him the truth, that I wanted to run away with you, that a part of me always will.

That's what I am doing, setting sail on Nola. I have restored her to the best of my abilities and I am ready to come after you, Hannibal.

I am not alone though, Abigail is coming with me.

See you soon,

Will

***

Hannibal,

You bastard. When did you become a coward? You leave me your broken heart but can't bear to face me? Are you so terrified of your feelings that you can't meet me in person?

Are you rejecting us, Doctor Frankenstein? Unable to face your own creations? Palermo and the Chapel are beautiful but I couldn't care less for them. I can feel you. I know you are here.

I am not interested in your broken heart, Hannibal, or any of your grand declarations. I want you.

And I'm not the only one apparently. I've met Chief Investigator Rinaldo Pazzi. Seems like he's never forgotten you. An old dog with a bone. It will get him killed. I know it and I'm usually right about this kind of thing.

He showed me pictures of your art, and while it's beautiful, I prefer your latest pieces. You've become a master in your own right.

This valentine written on a broken man is further proof of this. I've grown tired of denying the beauty of your works, no matter how grotesque they are.

I think you would be happy to know how often you occupy my mind when I'm awake and my dreams when I sleep.

Did you hear my forgiveness, Hannibal, as it echoed around us, surrounding us? It's only now that we are apart that I realise how much we've bled into each other.

Grand gestures may be your area of expertise, but I'm sure you will appreciate the irony of me bestowing my forgiveness in a space that belongs to the dead when you feel like a shade and I feel like a living ghost.

My forgiveness is my parting gift, may it cut as sharply as the blade that you held.

Until next time when I can finally see you again,

Will

S3e03

Hannibal,

How strange it is to be in Lithuania. I'm chasing afterimages of you in places you haven't been for an eternity.

Your home must have been grand once upon a time. Now it is a husk, overgrown, soulless and gloomy among the ghastly trees. What memories sleep there, under the bramble and the decay?

What does it look like in your mind palace, does the same iciness and dreariness hang heavy in your mind? Are the vacant eyes of the windows so dark in your mind or do they shine with memories?

Fog hangs heavy everywhere and the smell of decay is all I can breathe and I'm not sure if it's from the dying leaves or the dead.

I saw her grave, Misha's, though I know her tomb is empty and that her ghost haunts you as much as Abigail haunts me. Who tends to her grave? All the others are disappearing under weeds and ivy, but freshly cut flowers lie at the foot of Misha's grave.

Is there another ghost here?

You said Misha was your charge, and you, like a father to her. What happened, Hannibal? You said you happened to yourself, but something happened to you. Misha is the key, I feel, but I would like to hear this secret from your lips directly rather than pry it open from a grave.

I feel enough like a voyeur rifling through your memories, walking the grounds of your home where you can never come back again.

I want to see you,

Will

***

Hannibal,

Guess I wasn't lying when I said I wanted to see you. I miss our conversations. I would fear for my sanity but conjuring you to hold a session in the middle of the irredeemable gloom of your estate feels more comforting than it has any right to be.

Do you conjure an image of me wherever you are? Do you ache for me as I ache for you? Do you see me just as I see you, comfortably settled deep in your office's leather chair, clad in one of your maroon suits, one leg over the other?

You claim that it's not healing to see your childhood home, but it's a good measure of your brokenness. I don't have a childhood home. I wonder what's the measure of my brokeness. You?

I am standing among the crumbling ruins feeling for the latch at the centre of your mind palace and I can't help but wonder again, do you feel my hand, like a frisson against your spine, feeling for the knobs ?

You say screams fill some of the rooms of your mind palace. But the corridors do not echo screaming…because you hear music. You are still so cryptic. Or maybe I am. You are not here after all. Only a figment of my imagination.

You will be glad to know I'm sure that the you in my head is just as insufferably pedantic as the real you. The cold is seeping through my coat as I write this letter against Misha's tomb and I'm beginning to lose sensation in my fingers.

I'll write to you later, in a desperate attempt to trick myself into forgetting my loneliness.

Will

***

Hannibal,

I wasn't too far off the mark. There is another ghost here. One who doesn't care much for me to my chagrin. She introduced herself as Chiyoh.

If she is indeed your childhood companion, time has stopped for her. She doesn't look a day over 25 despite you two having known each other back in the day.

You left here, Hannibal, among crumbling stones and overgrown graves, alone. How many of us have you discarded like this? Thrown away? Chiyoh, Abigail, myself…….How many more? Why is Bedelia the exception? What made her so special that you would take her to Italy to play your wife?

There is a man in the castle, rotting in jail. Who is he? I am curious. Is Chiyoh guarding more than just Misha's grave? What did he do to be kept in jail worse than an animal, I wonder.

I'm curious. Is this how you felt when you first met me? Did you feel this desire to disrupt the balance, give a little push? I want to see what happens when I make the wheels of time turn again after being frozen for so long.

I feel your presence everywhere, and yet you're not here with me. Guess it's my turn to play your part.

See you later,

Will

***

Hannibal,

Time has begun to flow once again for Chiyoh and she's free.

Many things happened but I will say this. One day when we are both grey and you have put the last ghosts of your past to rest, I hope we will come back here.

You've changed me. Irrevocably so and it has never been more apparent than here. I keep feeling your hand on the small of my back, caressing my nape. But it's not enough.

I want your warmth and your smile, the smell of your cologne and your polished leather shoes. I want to feel the softness of your hair and clean shaven skin against mine.

I want more than phantom fingers, I want to feel your body against mine, your breath against my neck, and your heart beating in unison with mine.

Come morning, I will deny it again, but for now, as I look at the man who killed Misha, metamorphosed in death into a firefly with wings of broken glass, I yearn for your presence.

Would you appreciate the beauty? His flesh is sewn with black thread, pulling his crossed arms flushed against his body, cabbage leaves wrapped around him like bandages mummifying a corpse or a chrysalis. He hangs from the ceiling as snails crawl over him. One day the corpse and the snails will be no more, devoured by fireflies.

This is my becoming.

I hope you will see it before it disappears.

I miss you,

Will

S3e05

Hannibal,

If the road to hell is paved with good intentions, the road to Florence is paved with pain. Every cell of my body aches. Chiyoh threw off the train, leaving me to limp my way to Florence.

For someone who berated me over not understanding means of influence other than violence, she had no qualms with throwing me off the train.

So here I am, with only my wallet, a pen, a knife, the letters I wrote to you, and a postcard with a copy of Botticelli's Primavera on me. T he night is cold and I'm resting by the side of

the railroad. My head is spinning and I must have a concussion because the stag is back.

I must tell you about him sometime. I thought he had died along with Abigail, drowning in the pool of her blood.

And yet he's back, guiding me faithfully toward you once more. I do not know what I will do once I see you. My ears are ringing, my sight is blurry.

I'm coming Hannibal,

Wait for me.

Will

---

s3e06

Hannibal,

Here I am, in Florence, and the first thing I've done is buy some paper so I can continue to write to you. Why? I don't know. Maybe because it's easier to say what I want to say if I don't see you.

Today is a day for reunion it seems. Seeing Jack again was a relief. Pazzi is dead but Jack lives. I am not the only one who had scores to settle with you, though I don't think Jack crossed the ocean alone on a boat. No. Jack is much more efficient. He must have taken the plane and come directly to Florence.

For some reason, I can't believe Jack's words about you being wounded and worried. Wounded? Maybe. I still remember how I found you that fateful night, covered in blood, some of it yours. Jack is strong, if anyone could have the better of you, it's him.

But worried? When have you ever worried, Hannibal? I refuse to believe it. Have you changed so much during our parting?

Bedelia for her part hasn't changed. She plays the confused victim admirably. But to hear her call herself your wife is repulsive. Who is Doctor Fell Hannibal? Is he an alias or a brand new you?

I'm worried. I don't know who I will find when I finally meet you. Will I recognise you? Or will you have changed too much? You are mine, Hannibal. Don't change where I can't see you. If you are to change, it will be by my hand and no one else's.

I guess these questions will be answered soon enough. After all, I know where to meet you.

See you in front of the Primavera, Hannibal.

Yours,

Will

There's something changed

Chapter Summary

Hannibal and Will reunite in Florence

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal smells him before he sees him and his lips quirk into a smile despite the pain that radiates from his face. He doesn't know when the atrocious aftershave stopped being offensive and instead became comforting.

Will is as battered as he is, their respective injuries mirroring each other and he can't help the words that slip out of his mouth unbidden.

"If I saw you everyday forever, Will, I would remember this time." And Will turns his head, looks at him and smiles, beautiful, radiant. His laugh is watery, his eyes blink to keep moisture away and his voice shakes as he speaks. Never had he seen him so undone except when Hannibal held him and gutted him.

But this is the past, and Will is here now, so close Hannibal can feel the warmth that radiates from him, dressed in a dark blue-grey suit. He's never been more beautiful in Hannibal's eyes. He wants to touch but he can't. Will must be the one to initiate contact. Hannibal can't. Not when his last touch was so destructive.

He wants to kiss Will as sweet words of understanding pour from his lips like nectar. Hannibal doesn't need any other sustenance than hearing Will say they have started to blur, two beings once separate becoming whole. His heart doesn't belong to him anymore. It now beats in the chest of the man sitting next to him.

Maybe Aristophane's idea of soulmates wasn't too far off the mark. He doesn't know, any more than Will, if he can survive separation. Not now. Not after being reunited again.

They exit the Uffizi Gallery, both of them limping. The gunshot takes him by surprise. Will collapses by his side, and a blade slides out of his hand. So this is the true form of Will's forgiveness. A blade. Anger will come later, but for now he weeps. Will had come all this way, had stepped into his memories and wandered the halls of his mind palace, only to draw a blade on him.

He won't touch Will; but dear Chiyoh who protected him once again carries Will's unconscious body to Hannibal's flat without a word. She doesn't look a day older than when he left her in Lecter Castle, but this is a mystery to ponder another day. For now, he has Will to attend to.

Will has regained consciousness and is panting in pain, sweat plastering his hair against this brow. Will's hair was wet too that night, plastered by freezing rain rather than sweat. And there it is, the anger. Heat suffuses his body, his heart is pounding and here is the anger. Will betrayed him. Once again.

Will chokes on the water Hannibal forces him to swallow. He doesn't care and despite his warning that the next minutes are going to hurt, seeing as the bullet is still inside Will's shoulder, he roughly strips Will of his jacket. He's been gentle enough. Will's grunts of pain are a symphony and Hannibal has to resist the desire to dig his nails into the skin of Will's neck and draw blood.

"You dropped your forgiveness, Will," he tells him. His voice is flinty, he's sure even Will, despite his pain, can hear the cold anger in it. Yet Will surprises him once again.

"That's not the only thing…Doctor Lecter," Will manages to pant through gritted teeth.

"How do you mean?" asks Hannibal. Will's smile is crimson and feral.

"Check…the…pocket," he says. How curious. The jacket is still where Hannibal left it, crumpled on the floor next to the leather seat in which Will sags. He's stopped fighting and it only makes Hannibal more curious.

There is an inner pocket in the jacket and something rustles when he presses against it. He looks at Will then, and finds the other man's eyes locked on him already. He looks back at the pocket and reaches inside with slightly shaking hands.

With some difficulty, he manages to withdraw a bundle from the pocket in which it was crammed. He wonders how he didn't see the bulge it would have surely made in Will's suit. The pocket wasn't meant to hold that many things and it's a wonder the lining hasn't torn.

He deposits the bundle on one of the coffee tables and Hannibal finally sees what the mysterious bundle is.

It's letters, miraculously unstained despite Will's injuries. There's also a Boticelli's postcard among the lot, a poor reproduction of the *Primavera*, and he wonders why Will bought such a thing. Then he turns it and the back is entirely covered in a near-unintelligible scrawl. One word catches his attention though. His name is in the top left corner. These are letters, yes, but not just any letters, they are addressed to him specifically.

His hands are trembling, and the anger leaves him in a great rush. What did Will write? Was he more forthright in his letters than he had been in front of the *Primavera* ? He wants to know, the curiosity is burning. But there are more pressing matters to attend to. He needs to take care of Will.

While Hannibal has been entirely focused on the letters, Will's eyes have rolled in their sockets and he appears to have lost consciousness from the pain without Hannibal to keep him awake.

His knees creak as Hannibal gets up and pain from the injuries sustained at Jack's hands flare up. Mindful of the aches in his body, he leans toward Will, fingers grazing his blood-soaked shirt with none of the previous roughness. Instead, he unbuttons the shirt with slow movements, careful to not jostle Will's shoulder.

Once Will is shirtless, Hannibal has to pause, breathless. There, above the navel, sat the smile Hannibal had given him. It has healed, but it will take longer to fade. For now, the raised edge is still pink, in stark contrast to Will's pale skin.

Heart fluttering and pulse pounding, Hannibal grazes his fingers against the scar. A full body shiver shakes him and he has to close his eyes, lost in the overwhelming feeling of seeing and touching the mark he had left on Will.

This scar is his.

It's not Jack's, nor Chiyoh's, or a nameless criminal in New Orleans who first shot Will.

Eyes closed, he lets himself enjoy the moment some more before marshalling his thoughts in order. The bullet is still inside Will's shoulder and he has to take it out. His mind clears and his hand is steady.

The procedure is quick and soon Will is tucked in bed, an IV hooked into the crook of his elbow, and Hannibal is finally free to read the letters. At first he wonders if the letters are his, if Will took them with him when crossing the Atlantic. But no. The paper hasn't the smooth quality of his notepaper. It's cheaper and feels coarse.

There are eight letters in total, all written in the same scrawling hand as the postcard. He wonders if he should go back to the living room and sit himself in the chair Will had vacated, but ultimately decides against it. Instead, he sits on the bed. Reluctance tugs at him, he doesn't want to let Will out of his sight.

He opens the first letter and starts to read. He drowns in Will's words, in the dry wit that permeates all the letters. Bedelia had proven herself to be a poor substitute for Will. She has been afraid despite her bravado. He owes her a debt for taking care of him after his fight with Jack, but it will only postpone the inevitable.

Murder didn't bring him the satisfaction he craved either. Anthony Dimmond had served his purpose but he had been nothing more than a fly, whose incessant buzzing had been a nuisance. Sogliato had been rude but killing the man hadn't appeased his savagery in the slightest.

He had been unravelling long before Jack came to Florence, and it's only now, with Will so close to him, that his seams stop coming apart.

An ache blooms in his chest when he reads about Misha. Rationally he knows that Chiyoh must have taken care of her grave, but it's another thing to read Will's words and imagine him walking amongst the graves, trying to uncover a mystery decades old.

When he reads about the firefly man, gooseflesh erupts on his arms and he feels weightless. How far Will has come since Randall Tier. He can see the tableau, luminous in the damp darkness of the cellar in Lecter's Castle. It's beautiful.

Finally the letters come at an end. His sight has gone misty and as he raises his head, Will's eyes are open and trained on him. Neither of them says anything, content to absorb the sight of the other in silence.

"Couldn't take your letters," Will says, words a bit slurred. "Didn't want to lose them. Alana told me where to find them."

"Dear Alana," Hannibal muses, "how is she?" Will squints at him, maybe to determine if Hannibal is being candid or not. He is. He's curious about what happened to her, though he does not regret it.

"She survived," is all Will says. His curls are in disarray, falling into his eyes, and Hannibal reaches to brush them away. He's treated to the sight of Will blushing, the red deepening as Hannibal traces the curve of Will's jaw with his fingertips.

"Is this you sweetening me before you decide to serve me for breakfast?" Will asks, cheeks flushed.

"No. We are past that, mylimasis," Hannibal tells him fondly and watches Will's brow furrow.

"You called me that too. In your letters. What does it mean?"

Hannibal tsks fondly.

"I'm sure you are clever enough to have an idea, Will."

Hannibal is expecting Will to blush again. Instead Will surges forward, and collapses against Hannibal's chest, face white with pain.

"I'm sorry," he says, and his voice is trembling. "I'm sorry I couldn't come with you. I didn't know. I thought you were still manipulating me. Thought that all you cared about was my becoming, not me."

Hannibal cradles him while Will's body shakes. His hands tangle in Will's curls and he tries to soothe the distraught man, pressing his face against his hair.

"Shhh. Calm down, mylimasis."

"Ask me again," Will demands, voice muffled against Hannibal's chest. "Please."

"Come away with me, Will," Hannibal breathes.

"Yes," Will says, untangling himself from Hannibal, just enough to raise his head and kiss him, thus sealing the promise.

His heart soars and he's kissing back, hard, possessive, hands tangled in Will's curls, drunk on the taste of his words.

He won't let Will go now. The teacup has gathered itself and he won't shatter it again.

"You're mine, now," Will tells him, eyes wide, a breathless smile on his lips as they part. Hannibal dives in, intent on capturing Will's lips again, but Chiyoh chooses this moment to make her presence known.

"Hannibal. There are people coming."

"Mason," Will mutters, voice gone cold with loathing. "Pazzi failed so he must have sent his own men."

He knew this was coming, but Hannibal doesn't let himself panic. They still have time. Not much, but enough that when Jack and Mason come, all they will find will be an empty flat. There are still many things to be done. They need to collect Will’s dogs for one, set up new identities, more tangible than the one Hannibal has been using in Italy so far. Eating a man and replacing him isn't enough to keep the police away from their trail for long.

But it can wait. He has to say farewell to Florence, but there are many other cities he wants to show Will, many places where they can recover in peace. They have all the time in the world now that they have found their way to each other again.

Chapter End Notes

That's the end! Thank you to everyone who read, left kudos or comments on this fic, I hope you enjoyed the ride.

End Notes

If it's not clear from the formatting :

- all the letters are in italics

- for clarity, the episode covered in the letters is indicated at the beginning

- the horizontal line between letters marks a change between episode

- the three stars *** show that it's a different letter but relates events that happened in the same episode as the letter before it

- Laukiu nesulaukiu means I can't wait

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!